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DAVIDSON

HEADS TO

BIG DANCE

stin told the office of the cretary of State he got cash sports agent as a student.

Warrants: Cash paid to UNC athlete

Football star Marvin Austin aid he received \$2,000 from a Georgia agent

By Anne Blythe and Dan Kane

abbythe@newsobserver.com dkane@newsobserver.com A new round of details in the 3-year-old UNC athletics scandal was released Monday, revealing the damn-ing image of a star UNC football play-er accepting a FedEx envelope filled with \$2,000 in cash. Marvin Austin, the UNC football far whose tweets about partying in Miami launched the NCAA probe that resulted in sanctions, told special agents with the N.C. Secretary of state's office that he received the cash from a sports agent while enrolled as a student, according to search warrants unsealed Monday in Wake County Superior Court. The warrants, which focus on Ter-ty Shawn Watson, a sports agent based in the Atlanta area, offer a broad-brush look into the world of sports agents and their use of go-be-tweens to woo top professional pros-puents to their client lists. Efforts to reach Watson on Monday official seclined to comment on de-uls in the documents.

tails in the documents. "We saw the search warrants for the first time today and are reviewing them," Bubba Cunningham, the UNC athletics director since November 2011, said in a statement. "It is not ap-propriate for anyone at the university to comment on the specifics of the Secretary of State's investigation of agent activity." NCAA officials also declined to comment, saying they cannot discuss current, pending or potential investi-gations. SEE UNC, 5A

SEE UNC, 5A

Hospitals bristle at proposal to ease way for same-day surgery centers performing routine procedures

BY AMES ALEXANDER b) Finder Charlestenberg aalexander@charletteobserve.com Hospitals could face significantly more competition for routine surger-ies under a bill that proponents say could save N.C. patients and taxpay-ers hundreds of millions of dollars. N.C. House Bill 177, sponsored by

three Republicans, would make it easi-er for physicians to open same-day sur-gery centers, offices that typically charge far less than hospitals for out-patient procedures. Introduced two weeks ago, the leg-islation is already facing stiff opposi-tion from the state's powerful hospi-tal industry. The N.C. Hospital Asso-ciation contends the bill would bene-fit a few doctors at the expense of hospitals, but would not cut costs or save state money. The state severely limits the num-

ber of new operating rooms. The bill's supporters say that's be-cause North Carolina has one of the na-tion's most restrictive certificate of need (CON) programs. The CON laws were designed to prevent excessive fa-cilities and equipment. But instead of reducing costs as intended, the bill's proponents say the program squelches competition and makes routine surger-ies more expensive. The new legislation aims to change that. Supporters say more competition is bound to help patients

ONLINE
 Read the N.C. Hospital
Association's full statement, and
more from the bill's proponents, at
charlotteobserver.com.
 Read the Observer's Prognosis:

Profits series at charlotteob erver. com/hospitals

and taxpayers. "Lawmakers have a chance to give citizens relief from extraordinarily over-inflated hospital prices," said SEE HOSPITALS, 5A

Airport office market perking up

Bill targets hospital prices



at the former Coliseum site on West Tyvola Road as construction starts on a 284-unit apart cted to open in Octob Long-dormant W. Tyvola Road area seeing renewed signs of vigor, 'poised for a resurgence'



rs of Coliseum Centre have put land under contract and plan to Id. They think they can recruit Northeast companies to the site. Owners of Co

By Kerry Singe

ksinge@charlotteobsever.com Charlotte's once-bustling airport office district around West Tyvola Road, which has seen lackluster growth for more than a decade, could be on the cusp of a resurgence, bro-kers sav

ers say. For a time in the 1980s and '90s, For a time in the 1980s and '90s, that area was an epicenter of office leasing and corporate relocation, fu-eled by its available space, cheaper rents and proximity to Charlotte Douglas International Airport. The Charlotte Coliseum brought still more energy, drawing tens of thou-sands to Charlotte Hornets games and sellout concerts. But vacancy rates rose in the early 2000s as developers built more office towers uptown and the Bissell Cos. created a new office park in Ballan-

tyne. The Hornets left for New Or-

tyne. The Hornets left for New Orleans and the coliseum was imploded, the land sold to a developer.
 Now, the airport office market, the tity's second-largest by square footage, is seeing renewed largest of the signs of vigor.
 Investors are buying buildings.
 Some large tenants have expanded or renewed leases. And work is finally under way at the former coliseum site where the land, slated for a large mixed-use project, sat dormant for nearly six years.
 Among the recent highlights:
 Last year the real estate investment and management arm of Goldman Sachs Group Inc. bought seven buildings in LakePointe Office Park for 357 million. Starwood Capital Group purchased two buildings in LakePointe Corporate Center for SEE WEST TYOLA, 7A







VOTING FOR NEW POPE TO BEGIN

are to a decision. Voting starts Tuesday. 4A Report: Airport transfer wouldn't affect bonds Supporters of an authority said the report should remove a hurdle to the change. 1B

Rent struggles close school Landlord says franchise holders of Goodard School in northeast Charlotte of more than \$60,000. 1B Chiquita lost \$408M in '12 The loss came as the company restructured its business. Business, 2B

Wells Fargo among 6 biggest buys for Warren Buffett Shares of IBM, DirectTV, General Motors also among

his purchases. 2B Scholar candidate moves beyond her disability

Providence High senior Rebecca Combs, who has cerebral palsy, is nominated for U.S. Presidential Scholars progra Young Achievers, 4-5D

Local woman's voice mail tale leads to an NPR honor

By PAM Kelley

Charlotte writer Lisa Rubenson's gem of a short story, "Sorry for Your Loss," made its debut Saturday eve-ning on National Public Radio. "Hi,

reporter

periodically gives listeners a writing prompt and challenges them to con-struct an extremely short story – no more than 600 words. The latest prompt: Submit a story in the form of

prompt: Submit a story in the form of a voice mail message. When she heard the prompt, Ru-benson, who works as a freelance writer and writes fiction in her spare time, considered all the rambling messages that she has left, then de-cided to give it a go. She thought about the awkward-ness of reconnecting with someone who knew you at a much younger

hess of reconnecting with someone who knew you at a much younger age, when you were both different people. She also contemplated how people often don't say things that need to be said and blurt things best left unsaid.

In her story, a woman named SEE NPR HONOR, 7A







The Three-Minute Fiction contest

Fiction contest. NPR Tamara Not a bad way for a writer to get nee left

nal Public Radio. "Hi, it's me - Christine," it began. "I can't be-lieve you still have this number." The piece beat out more than 4,000 en-tries to win NPR's latest Three-Minute Eviction context NPR



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Student loan debt is now second to mortgage debt

By Charles M. Blow

We are reaching a crisis point is country's higher education s As college tuitions rise and state

As college tuitions rise and state and local funding for higher educa-tion falls – along with median house-dents are taking on staggering levels of ebt. And many can't find jobs that pay well enough to quickly pay off the debt. This has long-term implica-

long-term implica-tions for our society

Biomagenetic implication of the second secon

priations fe just \$5,896.

just \$5,896, The cost of tuition, on the other hand, has increased dramatically. Ac-cording to CNN Money: "Over the past decade, average annual tuition for a year of community college has risen 40 percent to \$3,122, according to the College Board, a nonprofit group that runs the \$3AT exam. At 4-year public universities, the cost has

WEST TYVOLA

\$28 million. True North Manage-ment Group paid \$34.6 million for the 13-building Vanguard Center of-

ment Group paid \$34.6 million for the 13-building Vanguard Center of-fice park. • Dirt is moving at the former colise-um site on West Tyvola as construc-tion starts on a 284-unit apartment complex expected to open in Octo-ber. Sidewalks and other road im-proverny owner says it will look to develop retail this year. • Last April, New Jersey-based Vi-sion Equities and partner CarVal In-vestors paid \$103 million for the six-building Coliseum Centre office park. The new owner boosted occu-pancy and recently announced it was buying more land so it could build new office space, between I50,000 square feet and 400,000 square feet. • In December, Charlotte-based re-tailer Belk Inc. said it planned to lease about 50,000 square feet at Coliseum Centre and add 150 jobs to its existing 1,000 employees at the company's headquarters nearby on West Tyvo-la.

la. Longtime commercial real estate broker John Culbertson of Cardinal Real Estate Partners said things are moving in the right direction. "The are a is poised for a resur-gence," said Culbertson, who sold the coliseum site on behalf of the city. "There are a lot of positive things that are happening there."

space, and such space was expensive and difficult to find in the SouthPark

Near uptown and airport

■ from 1A

Tisen 68 percent to \$7,692 a year." Meanwhile, a September census report shows, median household incomes fell by nearly 7 percent from 201 to 201. And there are now more Americans living in poyverly than at any time since record-keeping began more than half a century ago. This confluence of trends has led to higher borrowing by students. An analysis last month by Dong-how Society and the federal Research and the federal Research and the federal Research and the federal Research and the bit is the only kind of brough the Great Recession" and is now the "second largest balance after mortgage debt." According to Lee, student loan debt is fast approaching student loan debt is at approaching the Great Recession" and is now the "second largest balance after mortgage debt." According to Lee, student loan debt is fast approaching the Great Recession" and is now the "second largest balance after mortgage debt." According to Lee, student loan debt is fast approaching the Great Recession" and is now the "second largest balance after mortgage debt." According to Lee, student loan debt." The relative student loan debt." The relative for domes pectrum, even though households in the bottom fifth of the income spectrum, even though mosers on al mountain of debt.
And many of those graduates are inform of the second respect from the Center for College Affordability and Productivity found that "about 48 percent of productivity found that "about 48 percent of molyed U.S. college graduates are in post hat the Bureau of Labos Tattics suggests requires less than a foury expression and the suggest star a foury expression. And yet, this country needs a more from ledgeable workforce to be competitive. While the number of college graduates in creasing, and merican and the stores and the debt.

Email: chblow@nytimes.co

By Doyle McManus Los Angeles Times President Obama owes Karl Rove a thank-you note.

buring last year's election campaign, Rove and other Re-publicans showed how federal tax law could be stretched to

 MeManus
 now rederat tax law could be stretched to could be stretched to mittee into a "social welfare" organization. These nonprofits, known as 50(c)(4)s, kar e defined by the Internal Revenue Code as "primarily engaged in promoting in some way the common good and general welfare."

 This year, with the president's blessing, former Obama campaign aides have followed in Rove's muddy path and launched their own social welfare organization, called Organizing for Action (with happily, the same initials as Obama for America). This new group has decided to improve humanity by keeping Obama's grass-roots supporters mobilized, on the weiging ponear for TV come

prove humanity by keeping Obama's grass-roots supporters mobilized, and by raising money for TV com-mercials to criticize Republicans who stand in the president's way. There's nothing wrong with politi-cal organizing, of course; encourag-ing citizens to get involved is a good thing. But using the "social welfare" clause to run a political campaign is a stretch when Republicans are doing it, and it's just as tawdry in the hands of Democrats. It's even more un-seemly, somehow, when the White House lends the president's prestige to such an operation. "It's like selling the Lincoln Bed-room, but without the sheets," charge es Bob Edgar, a former Democratic

To have seeing the Enform beer-room, but without the sheets, "charg-es Bob Edgar, a former Democratic congressman from Pennsylvania who's now president of Common Cause, the nonpartisan reform group." It smells." Still, it was a stroke of unalloyed chutzpah when Rove denounced the idea, saying he never could have got-ten away with it in George W Bush's White House. I'd bet his real regret is that he just didn't think of it then. Obama's licutenants, stung by the criticism, have scrambled to an-nounce new, self-imposed rules to reduce the appearance that OFA will give donors special access to the president. Chairman Jim Messina is-

From Page One



Viewpoint



President Barack Obama's 2012 campaign manager Jim (shown here last year with strategist Jim Margolis) nov for Action, a "nonpartisam" - wink, wink - nonprofit pro common good and general welfare." ign manager Jim Messina, right, m Margolis) now chairs Organizi

sued a statement promising that the organization would take no money from corporations or lobbyists, and would identify big donors and how much they give. (Under the law, 501 (c)(4)s are allowed to take corporate money and to keep donations anonymous, a dodge Rove has embraced without apology). And White House Press Secretary Jay Carney insisted that big donors and bundlers would it be allowed to purchase meetings with the president. But another board member told me that Obama may still meet with the organization's leaders when it holds its first big meeting in Washington this week. "This is a lot of noise over nothing," the board member said. "It's ridiculous to think the president can't meet with his own supporters." In a practical sense, at least, that's true. As Edgar notes, many of Organizing for Action is better than other 501(C)(4)s: At least we know who's behind it. Rove's organization, Crossroads OFS, buy

better than other 501(c)(4)s: At least we know who's behind it. Rove's or-ganization, Crossroads GPS, buys TV commercials without saying who paid for them – the political equivalent of an anonymous letter. Still, Organizing for Action shares one unattractive quality with Rove's 501(c)(4): hypocrisy. For legal rea-

it claims to be no it says it isn't attempting to influence elections. But its first advertising

J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE

It says it isn't attempting to influence elections. But its first advertising buy, criticizing members of Con-gress who don't support Obama's gun-control proposals, was directed only at Republicans, even though there are Democrats who are waf-fling on gun control, too. The bigger problem is that Oba-ma's embrace of the organization is another sign of how remote the goal of campaign reform has become and how thoroughly Obama has aban-doned that cause. When Obama be-gan running for president in 2007, he sounded like a genuine reformer. He said he wanted to limit the role of money in campaigns and create the most transparent presidential ad-ministration in history. But in prac-tice, he has walked away from that piece of his agenda.

tice, he has walked away from that piece of his agenda. Aides and supporters say he's had to play by the rules that are in place, including the Supreme Court's 2010 rulings on corporate contributions, and they have a point. If Obama didn't take advantage of every open-ing, they argue, it would amount to "unilateral disarmament." But advocates of reform were hop-ing for more. "He won the election," Edgar said. "Now he has an opportu-nity to lead. But what he's doing with OFA doesn't look like any kind of re-form."

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An image from the Coliseum Centre Expansion "Opportunity is Knocking" b

ONLINE Check out an interactive map of southwest Charlotte's growing office market and more photos of the Coliseum Centre construction at charlotteobserver.com.

Average rents for the market cur-rently are roughly 20 percent less than those in Ballantyne. Located on 66 acres at Tyvola Road and Billy Graham Parkway and near the site of the former coliseum, near the site of the former coliseum, the Coliseum Centre office park was developed by Crescent Resources in the 1990s. Tenants include Compass Group, LPL Financial and United Technologies Corp., formerly Good-rich Corp., which last year expanded by 80,000 square feet to occupy an entire 199,000-square foot building. Compass Group has been a tenant for nearly 20 years and recently signed a L2-year lease extension. In 2010, with its lease set to expire in 2013, the food service company ex-plored several options, including a move elsewhere within the Charlotte area, said spokeswoman Cheryl Queen.

Near updown and airport Vision Equities managing partner fred Arena had worked in the Char-tore office market for six years be-foce buying Coliseum Centre. A former managing director at Goldman Sachs, Arena said he liked buildings and proximity to uptown, highways and the airport. Me says he wasn't daunted by the area's nearly 30 percent vacancy rate. To the says he wasn't daunted by the area's nearly 30 percent vacancy rate. To the says he wasn't daunted by the area's nearly 30 percent vacancy rate. To the buildings and proximity to uptown, buildings and proximity to uptown, and the says he wasn't daunted by the area's nearly 30 percent vacancy rate. To to to to be althy. Arena says his research suggested the market was buch as those at Coliseum Centre. Notife's airport office market attracted the biggest share of the city's large corporate relocations and expan-sions due to its larger amounts of variable new space and cheaper rents. Uptown at the time didn't have large contiguous amounts of office space, and such space was expensive and difficult to find in the SouthPark

Queen. "After a thorough review, we ulti-mately decided that remaining on matery decided that remaining on our current space provided the opti-mal solution," she said. "In addition to making economic sense, we were able to find solutions for our most pressing needs, including the addi-tion of a parking deck, additional of-fice space and a budget for tenant im-provements."

provements." Arena wants to build on the cen-ter's success and is buying an adja-

cent 27 acres from developer Pope & Land Enterprises. Arena has hired Lincoln Harris to market plans for a build-to-suit office project. With such a project, tenants can shape a building's construction to meet their needs. Plans allow for 150,000 square feet to 400,000 square feet. Arena said he believes his build-to-suit proj-ect can help recruit companies from the Northeast. Campbell Walker and Marshall

Campbell Walker and Marshall Williamson with Lincoln Harris are pitching the project to employers both in and outside the Charlotte

market. Williamson said they believe more companies are becoming confident enough in the economy to commit to

enough in the economy to commit to a move. "It's about finding the right com-pany with strong leadership to make long-term commitments," he said. If the new office space is built, it would mark the first new major of-fice construction in the airport office market since the second quarter of 2011, when Highwoods Property built a 150,100-square-foot building for the FBI, according to research by Char-lotte-based Karnes. Prior to that, no office space had been built in that area since 2008.

been built in that area since 2008. Karnes analyst Andrew Jenkins said it's smart to get ahead of demand and make property available for ten-

"We have a lot of investors nov looking at this market and saving it is going to grow and lease up space," he said. "They don't want to be out of the running when companies are

considering places in the region. Old coliseum site abuzz

Next to the Coliseum Centre sits

Next to the Coliseum Centre sits the site of the demolished Charlotte Coliseum, which is once again hum-ming with construction noise. For years, a weathered green trail-er with a banner advertising City Park stood largely alone on the site along West Tyvola. Now, cement trucks, construction workers and cranes are working on a new apart-ment complex.

cranes are working on a new apart-ment complex. Atlanta-based Pope & Land Enter-prises paid \$234 million for the 150-acre site in 2006, near the height of the real estate market. The site is zoned for up to 200,000 square feet of of retail development, up to 400,000 square feet of office space, two hotels, more than 1,000 for-sale residential units and 1,410 apart-ments.

Besides the apartments that are being built by Atlanta-based Oxford Properties, a developer is eyeing the site for a possible hotel, said Mason Zimmerman, senior vice president with Pope & Land. Zimmerman, who wouldn't name the developer, said a with Pope & Land. Zimmerman, who wouldn't name the developer, said a new traffic light should be installed by the end of the year. The firm also is adding parks, jogging trails and sidewalks to connect the project with the Charlotte Regional Farmers Mar-ket and manicured office parks. "There is momentum," Zimmer-man said. "And we're encouraged by it."

An excerpt First paragraph of "Sorry For ur Loss": "Hi, it's me – Christine. I can't Yo

"Hi, it's me - Christine. I can't believe you still have this number. That I still remember it. But there's your voice on the machine ... like no time has passed. I'm so sorry for your loss, Nick, for your mom. Can anyone else hear this? (PRESS # To ERASE AND RERE-CORD YOUR MESSAGE)" Bead and hear the clame http:// Read and hear the story: http:// n.pr/Y3nNf0

NPR HONOR from 1A

Christine keeps recording, then eras-ing and re-recording, a phone mes-sage to a long-ago boyfriend named Nick. Her ostensible goal is to convey condolences following the death of his mother. But all sorts of personal history keeps leaking into her messag-es.

es. "I was kind of curious about a story that might tell itself accidentally," Ru-

that might tell itself accidentally," Ru-benson says. NPR enlisted graduate writing stu-dents as first-round contest judges. They passed favorites to novelist Mo-na Simpson, whose works include "My Hollywood" and "Anywhere But Here." Simpson chose Rubenson's story as the winner, calling it funny, yet "strikingly yearning." Rubenson, 46, credits several UNC Charlotte English professors, espe-

yer strikingly yearning. Rubenson, 46, credits several UNC Charlotte English professors, espe-cially Aaron Gwyn and Tony Jackson, for teaching her about writing. Ru-benson completed an English degree at UNCC in 2002. She had studied at the University of Maryland years ear-lier, but left before she graduated to take a job. She also earned a master's in liter-ature from UNCC, juggling classes while she and her husband were rais-ing their daughters, now 11 and 13. Her Three-Minute Fiction story will be published in the Paris Review, quite a coup for an aspiring writer. Until now, Rubenson's only published fiction was a story in a local literary journal.

journal. Her NPR contest win has given her

Her NPR contest win has given her much-needed encouragement, she says, as she works on several short stories. "This was the green light I needed to move forward." Fittingly, Rubenson learned she won the contest from an NPR produc-er's voice mail message. She has no plans to ercse it. plans to erase it.